

DBQ WRITING TIPS

8-Step Strategy:

1. Read the question three times. Do not move on until you fully understand it.
2. Identify the **task** by circling the main words. (For example: assess the validity, compare and contrast, evaluate relative importance, analyze the significance, etc.)
3. Ask yourself “**what do I have to prove?**” (e.g. Foreign policy *is* more important than domestic policy).
4. Pay special attention to **economic, political, social issues** that need to be included.
5. **Make a list (outline) of outside information** (as if you were writing a standard essay).
6. **Examine the documents**, underlining any key words or phrases that you may use later in the essay. Reread the question again after reading the first three documents.
7. **Construct a thesis** that is well-developed and clear. If the thesis is a mystery to the writer, it will be a mystery to the reader!
8. Write your essay.

Some Key Points to Remember:

- Start with outside information first & write it down; then read the documents; then construct a thesis.
- Make your life easier by constructing a thesis that can reasonably include most/ all of the documents (even if you don't really believe your thesis). It is better to be "practical" than "right."
- Use as many documents as you can as long as they fit your thesis.
- Don't explain documents -- that is not your task.! AP readers have a list and a summary for each document. Use documents to reinforce your main points and outside information.
- Don't rewrite large portions of documents. Try to limit quotations to 1 sentence or less.
- Reference author's you are citing (e.g. ... "In the letter by Abraham Lincoln")
- Cite every document used, e.g., (Doc. A), (Doc. F)
- All fundamental AP writing principles you have learned regarding standard essays apply to DBQ essays.